

Phonemic Formation and Its Representations in Generating the Meaning of the Holy Qur'anic Text

Zahira Karoui

Professor of Higher Education

Faculty of Letters and Languages

University of the Brothers Mentouri / Constantine 1

zahira.karoui@umc.edu.dz

Ouarda Mecili

Professor of Higher Education

Faculty of Letters and Languages

University of the Martyr Abdelhafid Boussouf / Mila

o.mecili@centre-univ-mila.dz

Received: 14/01/2026

Accepted: 10/04/2026

Published: 01/08/2026

Presentation Text:

The textuality of the Holy Qur'an constitutes a semantic presence in religious consciousness. Perhaps what distinguishes this presence is the nature of the questions it raises, as it represents an eternal reference, which constantly makes it subject to the dialectic of approach and study. Accordingly, the presence of the Qur'anic text has become a central focus for objectives of thought and a source for many fields of dialogue. From this perspective, this study seeks to lead the text towards systems of phonological thought, drawing upon the corpus of the Qur'anic text. In this context, the content of this approach can be highlighted, as this research attempts to engage with the Qur'anic discourse through an exploratory vision based on observing some Qur'anic verses and tracing their phonetic phenomena and their role in semantic generation. It is an attempt to reread the Holy Qur'anic text and examine its phonemic components through the conceptual tools produced by the theory of phonological formation, which contribute to revealing phonetic relationships and their semantic role at the level of the surface structure of the construction, as well as their reflections on the deep structure of meaning and signification. These are aspects whose significance is affirmed within the framework of the reading act of Qur'anic discourse.

Based on this premise, this shift that we seek to explore adopts the reading act as a method through which it addresses those questions and meanings related to the mechanisms of discourse within which the Qur'anic corpus was generated.

Perhaps we would not be mistaken if we say that the sacred discourse contains more examples than can be counted, in which words were selected with utmost precision and arranged within sentences in such a way that their changing phonetic structure corresponds with their expressive state.

This entire presentation is nothing but an attempt to establish a solid foundation for seeking a satisfactory answer to the perplexing question: Does sound possess a semantic value in

constructing the linguistic system of the Qur'anic discourse, and what are the manifestations of this value within the structure?

To what extent can phonetic phenomena harmonize, through their features, with their semantic contexts? And how do phonemic components interconnect to confer a semantic value upon the linguistic events of the Qur'anic discourse?

These are the questions that have strongly imposed themselves within a cultural field dominated by voices raising numerous questions about the Qur'anic text and the expressive potentials it encompasses, based on the conceptual charge and the broad semantic generative energy performed by phonetic phenomena. This is what we will attempt to highlight through the study of selected models from the sacred text in order to explore phonemic formation and its representations in constructing the semantic energy of the text.

The Concept of Phonemic Formation

Sound plays a major role in the process of formation, because the speech we utter contains a continuous stream of interconnected sounds used to express different meanings. Accordingly, phonemic formation is the sound system that realizes the actual existence of language; it is the system of sounds through their association with expressive aspects.

In this sense, phonemic formation is of great importance in the semantic determination of linguistic construction (the speaker conveys different meanings that correspond with the sound system used in the verbal message). Therefore, Joseph Michel Shrem referred to it as “musical phonetic engineering,” which occurs as a result of the systematic repetition of letters and the phonetic harmony resulting from their points of articulation¹. In this sense, it studies the affective relationship between sounds.

Al-Jahiz (d. 255 AH) demonstrated that sound is an essential element in language, stating: “Sound is the instrument of utterance and the essence through which segmentation is achieved, and through it composition exists.”²

Kamal Abu Deeb defines phonemic formation, stating: “It is the activity that conveys to the highly sensitive recipient the feeling of the existence of an inner movement with a growing vitality, which grants the kinetic sequence a deep tonal unity by imparting certain characteristics to the elements of the kinetic mass.”³

It is worth noting that the Qur'anic text comes in a particular form of phonetic formation or construction, and that its suitability, consistency, and harmony with the meanings intended by the verse or the surah are of great significance. In this regard, Al-Rafi'i states: “When the Qur'an was recited to them, they saw its letters within its words, and its words within its sentences, as wonderful linguistic melodies, as though, due to their harmony and correspondence, they formed a single piece.”⁴

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Tools of Phonetic Formation

The process of phonetic formation is associated with a central term that must be referred to, namely:

The Phoneme (Le Phonème): The emergence of the term phoneme is linked to phonological theory. It is defined as “the smallest phonetic unit that cannot be analyzed or divided,”⁵ which has a fundamental role in the expressive system. Thus, phonemes represent the features of sounds and forms of speech⁶, while their material realization is achieved through actual sound or pronunciation.

Among the closest definitions of the phoneme is that provided by Trnka, who defines it as “every sound capable of producing a semantic change.”⁷ Meaning here refers to everything that can be inferred from an utterance within its linguistic and situational context, or it is a mixture of data provided by the text,⁸ along with the inferences and additions made by the recipient.

Accordingly,⁹ meaning is the outcome of combining the semantic units of the text, which are derived from the pronunciation of certain sounds in light of their interaction with the recipient’s mind.

On this basis, the phoneme is the sound capable of producing a semantic change. This definition includes all the sounds of the Arabic language, namely letters and vowels (the fatha, damma, and kasra), as well as long vowels (the wāw, yā’, and alif). Thus, the Arabic language comprises thirty-four sound units or phonemes, which can be classified into four groups as follows:

- Twenty-six phonemes for consonants (les consonnes): They are: (the hamza, bā’, tā’, thā’, jīm, hā’).
- Three phonemes for short vowels (les voyelles): They are the fatha, damma, and kasra.
- Three phonemes for long vowels: They are the alif, wāw, and yā’.
- Two phonemes for semi-vowels (semi-voyelle) or semi-consonants (semi-consonne): They are the wāw and the yā’.

It is worth mentioning that the idea of the phoneme, in its origin, was associated with the invention of alphabetic writing. Daniel Jones stated that accurate writing systems require, in their composition, a theory of phonemes.¹⁰

The following table contains the Arabic sounds and their corresponding symbols in the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA).¹¹

Consonants					
International symbol	Arabic symbol	Sound name	International symbol	Arabic symbol	Sound name
s	ص	Ṣād	ʔ	ء	Hamza
d	ض	Ḍād	b	ب	’Bā

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t	ط	'Tā	t	ت	'Tā
d	ظ	'Zā	t	ث	'Thā
ʔ	ع	'Ayn	ž	ج	Jīm
G	غ	Ghayn	h	ح	'Hā
F	ف	'Fā	h	خ	'Khā
Q	ق	Qāf	d	د	Dāl
k	ك	Kāf	d	ذ	Dhāl
l	ل	Lām	r	ر	'Rā
m	م	Mīm	z	ز	Zāy
n	ن	Nūn	s	س	Sīn
h	ه	'Hā	š	ش	Shīn

Consonants					
International symbol	Arabic symbol	Sound name	International symbol	Arabic symbol	Sound name
y	ي	'Yā	w	و	Wāw
I :	ـِ	Long kasra vowel	i	—	Short kasra vowel
A :	ـَ	Long fathā vowel	a		Short fathā vowel
U :	ـُ	Long ḍamma vowel	u		Short ḍamma vowel

Phonetic Phenomena and Their Expressive Value in Phonemic Formation in the Qur'anic Text

The Holy Qur'an abounds in phonetic phenomena and their expressive values. Whoever contemplates the Qur'anic text clearly observes that it provides an applied effort in the field of tracing phonetic phenomena and their semantic generative potentials.

The phenomena of phonemic formation in the Qur'anic text are among the richest expressive activities in terms of representing meanings and employing phonetic and semantic energies in order to establish a unique text. This text has remained open to research, until its presence in the linguistic field has become a cognitive and phonetic requirement, since sound, through its resonance and contextual significance, has the ability to depict the event with precision.

Within this context, we will attempt to engage with a set of phonemic formations that have constituted a strong presence in the construction of the Qur'anic text, emphasizing the importance of phonetic tools in the structure of Qur'anic discourse for expressive and semantic construction. Accordingly, we will seek to trace the various modes of sound usage by examining some texts of the Holy Qur'anic discourse, and we will focus on the phenomenon of phonetic diversity, considering it a phonetic phenomenon closely connected to meaning.

The Effectiveness of Phonetic Diversity in Phonemic Formation

Sound is used in the Qur'anic text in various ways according to the context in which it occurs. Phonetic diversity refers to the totality of changes that affect the phoneme when placed within a specific context. Diversity is achieved through the auditory difference of sound, producing semantic intensification and a new meaning.

Forms of Phonetic Diversity in the Qur'anic Text and Their Significance

Phonetic Diversity through Repetition:

Repetition has a presence in the Qur'anic text, and we can include it within the study of phonetic formation if we consider that the repeated element primarily belongs to the phonetic aspect of language. It is one of the merits of eloquence. Al-Jahiz states, explaining its value: "If people could dispense with repetition and be spared the effort of searching and investigation, their consideration would decrease; and whoever has little consideration has little knowledge."¹²

Thus, the structure of repetition has a rhythmic value that operates on two levels: phonetic and semantic. It is either the repetition of a particular sound (single sound repetition) or the repetition of a sound group (compound or binary sound repetition).

First: Repetition of the Single Sound in the Qur'anic Text

The sacred text employs a specific type of sounds to express particular meanings, such as its repetition of certain sounds, including: the sound of the hamza, the sound of tā', the sound of jīm, the sound of rā', the sound of sīn, the sound of shīn, the sound of šād, the sound of 'ayn, the sound of qāf, and the sound of nūn.

Among the applied indicators of these phonetic phenomena, along with the expressive values they convey, are the following:

The Expressive Value of the Repetition of the Hamza Sound:

The hamza sound is a voiced, strong, and explosive laryngeal sound. With these distinctive phonetic features, the speaker employs it, relying on its voicing and explosiveness, to express certain psychological emotions.

Among the applied indicators of the hamza sound is that the expression in the Holy Qur'an points to its meaning through its resonance. In the Almighty's saying: ﴿...O mountains, repeat with him, and the birds...﴾ (Saba'/10), it is observed that the phonetic structure of the word (Awwibī) contains a musical resonance, a deep acoustic echo, and the release of sounds from the deepest part of the throat, namely the larynx, represented by the hamza. It is a strong explosive sound, followed by the sound of bā', which is also a strong explosive sound. This confirms the phonetic significance and its harmony with the meaning.

If this expression were replaced, the phonetic significance would disappear, and this represents one of the aspects of the phonetic inimitability of the Holy Qur'an. The Qur'an has selected the appropriate expression in the appropriate position. Furthermore, deriving this meaning phonetically indicates the independence of the selected word in conveying a deeper significance.

In the Almighty's saying: ﴿Do you not see that We have sent the devils upon the disbelievers, urging them on with persistent incitement﴾ (Maryam/83), meaning disturbing them and causing them anxiety, the verb (Azz) was used instead of (Hazz). The two words are similar even in

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pronunciation, and the hamza is related to the hā' because they share the same laryngeal articulation point. Thus, the two expressions are close due to the closeness of their meanings, which is pushing. However, the difference between them lies in the strength of the action of (Azz): azz means pushing with force, whereas hazz means pushing gently.

There is no doubt that the notion of strength in this expression results from the combination of the two qualities of voicing and strength in the hamza, which are among the strong phonetic qualities. As for the hā', it is a sound characterized by whispering and softness, which are qualities of weakness. Ibn Jinnī states: "It is as though they assigned this meaning to the hamza because it is stronger than the hā'; and this meaning is greater in souls than shaking, because you may shake something that has no feeling, such as a tree trunk, a tree branch, and the like."¹³

The Expressive Value of the Repetition of the Tā' Sound:

Sounds in the Qur'anic text possess a remarkable significance derived from the characteristics of their formation, as if they were a speaking image that depicts the scene with all its manifestations. If the context is one of awe, the sounds are appropriate for generating the same meaning; and if the context is one of intensity, the sounds are explosive, deriving their strength from the power of the scene they express.

Let us consider the effect of the tā' sound in shaping the semantic structure of the words of the Almighty: }When the sun is folded up, and when the stars fall away, and when the mountains are set in motion, and when the pregnant camels are neglected, and when the wild beasts are gathered... every soul will know what it has brought forth((Al-Takwīr/1–14).

And His saying: }When the sky is split open, and obeys its Lord and fulfills its duty; and when the earth is stretched out, and casts forth what is within it and becomes empty, and obeys its Lord and fulfills its duty((Al-Inshiqāq/5).

The tā' is a voiceless, alveolar dental, strong, and explosive sound. These verses speak of the horrors of the Day of Resurrection: the states of the sky and the planets, the mountains, the seas, the beasts, the souls, the earth, and so on. The listener perceives that there is a relationship between the state of beings on the Day of Resurrection and the sounds employed to depict that state. The tā' sound contains whispering, for on that day people will be in great terror, whispering to one another in search of an answer, but there will be no one to respond.¹⁴

The significance of these verses appears to be based on the repetition of the tā' sound, which is a sound of intensity, as this is reflected in the psychological meanings that shake the recipient's emotions, confirming its presence within the soul. Abdul Qahir Al-Jurjani states:

"Among what necessitates the permanence of a thing in remembrance and the establishment of its image in the soul is that it frequently appears before the eyes, continuously recurs in the fields of vision, and is perceived by the senses at all times or most of the time."¹⁵

This is the Qur'anic phonetic inimitability that combines the resonance of sound with abundant meaning. Every sound has its own significance and profound implication, as it becomes a representation of meaning in the most complete manner.

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The Expressive Value of the Repetition of the Jīm Sound:

The jīm is a voiced, strong, velar sound. It has been employed in the Qur’anic text to indicate an expressive value that is appropriate to the rhetorical context. Let us consider the saying of the Almighty: Do you not see that Allah drives clouds along.

The word (yuzjī), through its phonetic resonance, depicts the slow movement of clouds in the sky, unlike if the words (daf‘) (pushing) or (sāq) (driving) had been used. The word (yuzjī) begins with the yā’ and ends with the yā’ as well; the yā’ is a soft letter, while the zāy is one of the sibilant and voiced letters, and the jīm is one of the strong letters. Each feature has its effect on the soul and its role in clarifying the meaning.

The distribution of the letters of this word in terms of their points of articulation and characteristics, the variation of their vowels, and their composition have made its rhythm suitable and harmonious with the movement of clouds and their extension in the sky.

The Expressive Value of the Repetition of the Khā’ Sound:

The Holy Qur’an abounds in a range of sounds that correspond with meanings, so that the sounds of letters align with the events intended to be expressed. Among these is the word “kharra” , whose sounds correspond with the event in both of the following verses of the Almighty:

﴿...and whoever associates partners with Allah is as though he has fallen from the sky...﴾ (Al-Hajj/31)

﴿...so the roof fell upon them from above them...﴾ (Al-Nahl/26)

This expression, appearing in the same morphological form in both verses, indicates one concept, namely falling. This falling is accompanied by a certain sound, which is the kharīr (rushing or murmuring sound). Kharīr refers to the sound of water, the sound of wind, or other sounds produced by something falling from a height.

Thus, the event is derived from the nature of the sound itself, embodied by the phonetic structure marked by the khā’ sound. From this perspective, Al-Raghib Al-Isfahani (d. 502 AH) perceives the phonetic significance of the expression, stating: “The meaning of kharra is that he fell in a fall from which a kharīr sound is heard; and kharīr is used for the sound of water, wind, and other things that fall from a height.”¹⁶

The Expressive Value of the Repetition of the R Sound:

The rā’ sound is an alveolar, intermediate sound, and it is an approximant ¹⁷(constrictive) sound. It acquired this characteristic because it occupies a position between strength and softness.

The rā’ is a voiced, alveolar, and repetitive sound. Among the examples of its repetition is what appears in the saying of the Almighty: “..and those who arrange affairs, on the Day when the first blast shakes, followed by the second, hearts on that Day will tremble, their eyes humbled. They say: “Will we indeed be restored to our former state? Even after we have become decayed bones?” They say: “That, then, would be a losing return.” It will only be one single blast, and suddenly they will be upon the surface of the earth﴿ (Al-Nāzi‘āt/5–14).

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The rā' sound is repeated ten times in these verses. If we examine the context of the verses, we find that they speak of the horrors of the Day of Resurrection. This loud and frightening atmosphere is embodied by those phonetic structures marked by the rā' sound, which are employed to draw a vivid image of the Day of Resurrection: (tarjufu al-rājifah), (al-rādifah), (wājifah).

In these expressions, the sounds rā', jīm, and fā' are repeated, and they are characterized by voicing, strength, and repetition. These characteristics correspond to the meanings intended to be clarified for the recipient, as they create a musical atmosphere and deepen the meanings of trembling, fear, and agitation.

The rā' here is a voiced sound that strikes the ear, and it is considered one of the clearest consonants in perception. Therefore, some modern linguists have called it the alveolar liquid sound (alveolaire-liquide)¹⁸. It is a repetitive sound that comes after the voiced, emphatic ghayn, and is then followed by the strong explosive qāf, which is followed by the alif sound that gives it length and extension in order to reach the utmost degree of release, just as the reins are stretched for horses as an indication of their extreme speed.¹⁹

The transition of sounds between voicing, strength, and explosiveness corresponds to the objective of the sensory image of the horses' movement. This is what has been referred to as phonetic significance.

The Expressive Value of the Repetition of the S Sound:

The sīn sound is a voiceless, alveolar dental, soft, and sibilant sound. Through its hidden and whispered quality, the sīn is used to attract the recipient's attention through the hissing sound it conceals.

This sound is repeated in some Qur'anic texts with a clear intentionality and a deliberate significance, including the saying of the Almighty: }Say: I seek refuge in the Lord of mankind, the King of mankind, the God of mankind, from the evil of the whisperer who withdraws, who whispers into the hearts of mankind, from among jinn and mankind{(Al-Nās/1–6).

The sīn sound is repeated in eight words to increase the harmony between the intended meaning and the characteristics of the repeated sound. The repetition of sīn and nūn is interconnected in the surah, as we find that the sīn and nūn sounds are repeated twenty-four times, as illustrated in the following table:

Number of Occurrences	Characteristics of the N Sound	Number of Occurrences	Characteristics of the S Sound
14	A voiced, alveolar, liquid sound, intermediate between strength and softness, and nasal	10	A voiceless, alveolar dental, soft, sibilant, and repetitive sound
24			Total

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This indicates the extent of the phonetic harmony with the content of whispering, its concealment, and its powerful effect on the human soul. The significance of the sibilance of the *sīn* and its friction is thus combined with the hidden nasal quality of the *nūn* and the prominence of its tone within the context, achieving the general meaning of whispering in terms of concealment and quiet utterance.

Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya interpreted *Sūrat al-Nās* in a way that confirms the expressive value of the single sound, stating: “Since whispering is speech that the whisperer repeats and emphasizes to the one to whom it is conveyed, they repeated its expression in correspondence with the repetition of its meaning. Thus, they said: (whispered a whispering), so they observed the repetition of the expression in order for it to indicate the repetition of its referent.”²⁰

We also find the *nūn* sound, which is one of the nasal sounds and possesses a high resonance in the Arabic language. It corresponds with the tone whose resonance originates from the essence of nasalization (*ghunna*), and it is along with the *sīn* one of the elements producing meaning. The letter *nūn* occurs in the words (*al-nās*, *al-khannās*, *al-jinnah*) and is repeated fourteen times. It is distinguished by its nasal quality, which draws the listeners’ attention through a resonant auditory tone, resulting in a prominent phonetic significance.

This phonemic formation, which is present in the Qur’anic text, always accompanies meaning, providing it with an effectiveness that grants the text all the means of reaching the recipient.

Among the applied indicators of the repetition of the *sīn* sound, along with the conceptual charge it conveys, is also the saying of the Almighty: So I swear by the retreating stars, those that move swiftly and disappear, and by the night as it departs (*Al-Takwīr/15–17*).

Allah swore by the retreating, moving, and concealing stars, which are the stars that disappear during some of their cycles and do not appear, just as gazelles hide in their shelter, which is called *al-kanas*²¹. If we contemplate this image, we find that it signifies tranquility and calmness. The *sīn* sound is suitable for expressing this image, as it is a voiceless, soft, open, and delicate sound. This indicates the precision of the Qur’anic expression and the extent of its exceptional suitability to the intended meaning.

The Expressive Value of the Repetition of the Sh Sound:

The *shīn* is a voiceless, velar, soft sound characterized by diffusion. In phonetic terminology, diffusion refers to the spread of sound within the mouth. Ḥamad ibn Ibrāhīm al-Ḥamad states: “Diffusion is the extensive spreading of the airflow between the tongue and the palate and its expansion during the articulation of letters.”²²

The significance of this sound in the saying of the Almighty: ﴿A slanderer who goes about spreading gossip﴾ (*Al-Qalam/11*) refers to one who frequently mocks and harms others through speech in backbiting.²³ The *shīn* sound in the word (*mashshāʾ*) depicts the spread of slander, with an increased strength of this spreading quality through the gemination of the *mīm* and the extension of the sound through the long *fatha* vowel.

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Gemination (la gémation) in Arabic is considered a distinctive element related to the determination of meaning. The word “mashshā”, with the doubled shīn, plays a functional role in defining and conveying meaning, while the intensive form (ṣīghat al-mubālagha) confirms the strength of the attribute.

The Expressive Value of the Ṣ Sound:

The ṣād is a voiceless, emphatic alveolar dental sound. The ṣād sound occurs in the saying of the Almighty: But when there comes the Deafening Blast (‘Abasa/33).

The ṣād sound in (al-ṣākhkhah) has a strong resonance that almost pierces the eardrum. Through this resonance, it prepares the expression of the image embodied in the verse, represented by the scene of fear and terror, where a person flees from the closest of people to him: his mother, father, brother, spouse, and children.

In addition to the word (al-ṣākhkhah), there are other sound sequences that derive their intensity from their phonetic significance, such as the words (al-ḥāqqah) and (al-ṭāmmah). These words require a high degree of vocal pressure, which is achieved through the strength of the qāf and tā’ sounds, in addition to their gemination.

All of this clarifies the set of relationships between sound and its significance within this single phonetic family. When we add to this their specific meaning in the Book of Allah Almighty, namely the Day of Resurrection, we reach a scientific conclusion that demonstrates the correspondence between phonetic intensity and semantic intensity, between sound and its true meaning.

Thus, the saying of the Almighty: The Reality. What is the Reality? And what will make you know what the Reality is? (Al-Ḥāqqah/1–3)

is a reference to the Day of Resurrection. And His saying: But when there comes the greatest overwhelming event (Al-Nāzi‘āt/34)

refers to the Resurrection that overwhelms everything.²⁴

Thus, it can be said that the positions occupied by sound sequences have a prominent role in influencing the listener: “The connection between the positions of accumulated sounds has its significance and effect on the recipient.”²⁵

The Expressive Value of the ‘Ayn Sound:

The ‘ayn is a voiced, pharyngeal, soft, open, and low sound. The term soft sounds (al-muraqqaqa) refers to those that are free from emphatic articulation or prevented from it, and they include all the low sounds. Ibn al-Jazarī (751–833 AH) states in Al-Nashr: “All low letters are soft; it is not permissible to make any of them emphatic.”²⁶

Among the applied manifestations of the ‘ayn sound in the Qur’anic text is what appears in the saying of the Almighty: The Day they will be driven toward the Fire of Hell with a violent drive (Al-Ṭūr/13).

Sayyid Quṭb states: “The expression of driving (al-da‘) depicts its meaning through both its resonance and its shade. What is noticeable here is that the word al-da‘ refers to pushing

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forward, and this pushing often causes the one being pushed to produce an involuntary sound containing a silent ‘ayn... and in its resonance, it is the closest to the resonance of al-da’²⁷ Since the word (da‘) is stronger than (daf‘) in both resonance and meaning, the Qur’an preferred its selection.

Second: The Binary Repetition of a Single Sound in the Corpus of the Qur’anic Text

Among the most important forms of phonetic diversity in the Qur’anic text is the use of two sounds within a single discourse composed of several sentences that are equal in the number of their elements, as in the saying of the Almighty: Then they will be overturned into it, they and the deviators (Al-Shu‘arā’/94).

The Holy Qur’an employs the word (kubkibū) with the doubling of the sounds kāf and bā’ instead of (kubū)**, because the repetition of the two consonants “kāf” and “bā’” carries the significance of violence and intensity. They are both strong sounds, which corresponds to the context of speaking about the people of Hell.

The scholar Al-Ṭibī (d. 743 AH) states: The repetition of kabba indicates intensity.”²⁸

In addition to the lexical meaning of kubkibah itself, Al-Rāghib al-Aṣḥānī states:

“Al-kubkibah is the rolling of something into a deep pit.”²⁹

Based on what has been mentioned above, it can be said that the indication of fear in the aforementioned expressions was intended in itself to intensify the meaning. Therefore, the Qur’anic text employed two sounds denoting strength that are appropriate to the subject of the discourse. The characteristic of the repetition of the kāf and bā’ sounds conveyed the meaning of intensity, referring to the people of Hell who were overturned onto their faces.

Among the forms of binary repetition of a single sound in the Qur’anic text is the saying of the Almighty: So whoever is removed from the Fire and admitted into Paradise has indeed succeeded; and the life of this world is nothing but the enjoyment of delusion (Āl ‘Imrān/185). And His saying as well: And you will surely find them the most eager of people for life, even more than those who associate partners with Allah. Each one of them wishes to be granted a life of a thousand years, but even such a long life would not remove him from the punishment. And Allah sees what they do (Al-Baqarah/96).

The intended meaning of the word (zuhziha) in both verses is to remove or deliver.

The first point that should be indicated in this context is that the repetition of the sounds “ḥā” and “zāy” refers to a balance between the two doubled sounds, zāy and ḥā’, which gives them an expressive value through the phonetic characteristics they contain. They share the qualities of friction and softness, while they differ in whispering and voicing. The zāy is a voiced, soft, and sibilant sound, whereas the ḥā’ is a voiceless fricative sound.

This phonetic structure carries the codes of meanings and the keys to significations. This sound structure, or phonemic formation, harmonized with the meaning, the context, and the psychological atmosphere for which this expression was intended. The phonetic formation thus contributed to strengthening the suggestion of the image in the mind of the recipient.

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It is also necessary in this context to consider the *ṣād* sound in each of the following sayings of the Almighty: Indeed, We sent upon them a furious wind on a day of continuous misfortune (Al-Qamar/19).

As for *ʿĀd*, they were destroyed by a screaming, violent wind (Al-Ḥāqqah/6).

We hear a resounding sound, namely the letter *ṣād* in the word (*ṣarṣar*), which is a description of the violent wind. Ibn ʿĀshūr states: “Al-*ṣarṣar* refers to strong winds that have a sound similar to the sound of creaking.”

In the word (*ṣarṣar*),³⁰ there is repetition of the doubled sounds *ṣād* and *rāʾ*. The *ṣād* is a sibilant sound, and the *rāʾ* is repetitive. This suggests the strength and ferocity of the wind, as we perceive the clashing of the teeth through the repeated sibilant of the *ṣād*, and the vibration of the tongue through the repetition of the doubled *rāʾ*.

This produced an expression of intensity and embodied the image of terror, in addition to the lexical significance of the word (*ṣarr*) itself, which refers to the severe cold of winter, the falling of snow, and the sounds of violent winds. The root *ṣarr*, as expressed by Al-Rāghib al-Aṣḥānī (d. 502 AH), “returns to the meaning of intensity due to the contraction caused by coldness.”³¹

The phonetic structure, in its phonemic organization within the Qurʾanic text, also carries a significance that the recipient can perceive and embody. Let us consider the indication of the doubled repetition in the saying of the Almighty: When the earth is shaken with its ultimate shaking... (Al-Zalzalah/1),

and in His saying: And from the evil of the whisperer who withdraws, who whispers into the hearts of mankind (Al-Nās/4–5).

The verb in (*zulzilāt*) and (*yuwaswis*) contains repetition. The first embodies the sound of the earthquake that repeatedly occurs, while the second represents the sound of repeated whispering. Thus, there is harmony and consistency among these sounds at the level of the signifying surface structure, as well as coherence at the level of the signified deep structure.

Through this interpretive presentation, it becomes clear to the linguistic observer, while reading the Qurʾanic text, that the semantic effect produced by sound in meaning whether through phonetic resonance or through qualitative phonetic features is fundamentally derived from the tools of phonemic formation. Sounds acquire these meanings from their presence within the context, in addition to their articulatory and auditory nature and their various modes of formation.

Therefore, Al-Rāfiʿī considers the suitability of sounds to the context in the Holy Qurʾan as one of the elements that makes it miraculous, stating: “It is enough for you as a consideration of the miraculous nature of the musical arrangement in the Qurʾan that no one can claim it, nor can it be achieved in the manner in which it exists except in it, due to the arrangement of its letters according to their sounds and points of articulation, and the natural suitability of some of them to others in whispering and voicing, strength and softness, emphasis and lightness, diffusion and repetition...”³²

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We do not depart from the truth if we say that the correspondence between sound and the characteristic of the event being expressed carries a particular suggestion: “It arouses within the soul an atmosphere that prepares it to accept the meaning, directs it toward it, and suggests it.”³³ Thus, every expression in the corpus of the Qur’anic text comes in harmony with its mental image and auditory significance through the impact it produces on the ear or the effect it has on the recipient. All of this corresponds with the elements of phonetic significance: “which derives its tone and resonance from the nature of sounds.”³⁴

In other words, sounds in the Holy Qur’an come in accordance with their contexts. The context that requires whispering contains a greater presence of voiceless sounds, while the context that requires voicing contains a greater presence of voiced sounds. Thus, phonetic formation occurs within the text through a process of blending or combination at the level of binary oppositions: ***(whispering/voicing), (strength/softness), and so on.**

Al-Rāfi‘ī states: “The substance of sound is a manifestation of psychological emotion, and this emotion, by its nature, is the cause of the variation of sound through what it produces in terms of extension, nasalization, softness, or strength...”³⁵

This means that the expressive value does not rely solely on the semantic value of the sound, but also on its phonetic characteristics, in terms of strength, softness, emphasis, and attenuation, etc. This applies to the evocation of phonetic meaning in the Holy Qur’an, which we will attempt to clarify through the following:

The expressive value of the repetition of voiced, strong, and emphatic sounds and their correspondence with meaning

Voicing (jahr) in terms of its lexical meaning refers to raising the voice, as in the Almighty’s saying: “And if you speak aloud, then indeed He knows the secret and what is even more hidden” (Taha: 7). As for voicing in its technical sense, it is “the approximation or contact of the two vocal cords in a manner that does not allow the airflow coming from the lungs to pass through; this air is pushed rapidly through the pharyngeal cavity, encounters the vocal cords, and causes them to open and close quickly and regularly, making the two cords vibrate as a result of their oscillation.”

Thus, voicing, in this sense, is an auditory feature that depends on the amplitude of the vibrations associated with the sound. The greater the vibrations, the higher the intensity of the sound, and the weaker they are, the lower the intensity of the sound.³⁶

As for the term shiddah (strength), it refers to three aspects that can be explained as follows:

- Closure: the contact between two articulatory organs.
- Holding: the obstruction of the airflow as a result of the meeting of the two organs.

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- Opening and explosion: the sudden separation of the two organs and the allowing of the airflow to pass, which produces an explosion; therefore, modern linguists have called them “plosive sounds.” (plosives)³⁷

As for qalqalah (vibration), its lexical meaning refers to movement and disturbance. The author of Lisan al-‘Arab states: “Qalqala a thing, qalqalah... meaning that he moved it, so it moved and became disturbed.”³⁸ In its technical sense, it is “the vibration and movement of a letter through an articulation movement when it is pronounced while being silent, so that a strong resonance is heard from it.”³⁹

Thus, qalqalah (sonorisation) in this sense indicates the intensity of the sound and the vibration of the emphatic letter at its point of articulation while being in a state of silence, in such a way that it produces a distinctive resonance.

The Qur’an employed sounds possessing these three characteristics in a single sacred text, as in the Almighty’s saying: Say: “I seek refuge in the Lord of the daybreak, from the evil of what He has created, and from the evil of the darkness when it settles, and from the evil of those who blow on knots, and from the evil of an envier when he envies (Al-Falaq: 1–5),

as illustrated in the following table:

Total number of their repetitions	Words contained therein	Sounds	Sound characteristics
24	Ghassaq – A‘ūdhu – Fī Al-‘Uqad – A‘ūdhu – Hāsīd – Ḥasad Rabb – Waqab Qul – Falaq – Khalaq – Waqab – Ghāsiq – ‘Uqad Rabb – Al-Falaq – Sharr – Khalaq – Al-Naffāthāt	Gh – long vowel wāw – long vowel yā’ ‘ – Dh – D B – Wāw Q – L N – L – R	Voiced sounds
15	Rabb – Waqab – Qul – Al-Falaq – Khalaq – Ghāsiq – Waqab – Al- ‘Uqad – Hāsīd – Ḥasad A‘ūdhu – Al-Naffāthāt	B – Q – D Hamzah – T	Strong plosive sounds

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11	Qul – Falaq – Khalaq – Ghāsiq – Waqab – ‘Uqad	Q B	Qalqalah (resonant/vibrating) sounds
	Rabb – Waqab	D	
	‘Uqad – Ḥāsīd – Ḥasad		

It is clear from the foregoing that Surat Al-Falaq was constructed on the basis of voiced sounds; the number of sounds in it reached twenty-four sounds, compared with the number of voiceless sounds, which indicates that voiced sounds dominate the structure of the surah's text. The voiced sounds, with their characteristics, are semantically compatible with the meanings of the surah, as their strong clarity in hearing corresponds to the strength of the One in whom refuge is sought, namely the Lord of the daybreak, who is capable of everything.

The surah also contains a high frequency of strong plosive sounds, as this characteristic was repeated fifteen times, which is a large number compared with the number of soft sounds.

As for the qalqalah sounds, their number in the surah reached eleven vibrating sounds. Their meanings were consistent with the general meanings around which the verses revolve. The sound (Qāf) is among the letters with the highest degree of elevation and strength in phonetic science; therefore, the expression of the command and the one being commanded in this surah came with this characteristic of elevation. Then, the vibration of the Qāf represented the anxiety and disturbance of the soul resulting from the event of envy and the psychological implications arising from it, which accompany voiced, strong, and qalqalah sounds as the highest degrees of phonetic and psychological harmony.

This is one of the manifestations of phonetic significance, “whose meaning is derived from the nature of its formulation and what corresponds with its echoes as an auditory impact of the word, thus striking the ears with its strongest sounds in order to reinforce its meanings.”⁴⁰

The expressive value of the repetition of voiced, strong, and emphatic sounds and their correspondence with meaning

Tafkhīm (emphasis) is linguistically defined as thickening or intensification. It refers to giving weight to the sound of a letter when pronouncing it, so that the mouth becomes filled with the resonance of the letter. Its letters are called the letters of elevation (isti‘lā’), and the strongest letters in terms of emphasis are: {ṣād, dād, ṭā’, zā’}. These are inherently emphatic sounds, and their emphasis constitutes an integral part of their structure.

The Holy Qur’an employed sounds characterized by voicing, strength, and emphasis in a single sacred text, in harmony with the intended meaning of the Qur’anic word (aghtaṣha) in the Almighty’s saying: }And He darkened its night and brought forth its daylight{(Al-Nāzi‘āt: 29).⁴¹

The letters ghayn, ṭā’, and shīn share one common root that indicates darkness and what is similar to it. This word came with a sound pattern and meaning that correspond to the

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atmosphere of intensity and power suggested by the context, as the sounds of this word evoke strength and severity. The hamzah is a voiced strong sound, the ghayn is a voiced, elevated, emphatic letter, and the ṭā' is a strong, elevated, and closed letter, which suggests the dominance of the night and its encompassing of existence.

Another example is the Almighty's saying: ﴿And the earth entirely will be within His grasp on the Day of Resurrection, and the heavens will be folded in His right hand﴾ (Al-Zumar: 67).

These sounds are the most appropriate for this great event, as they include the characteristic of emphasis in three consonants: ḍād, ṭā', and qāf. We also find the dominance of strong consonants over soft ones, as follows:

Number of repetitions	Place of articulation and characteristics	Sound
Once	Velar – strong – voiceless – non-emphatic	Qāf
Twice	Labial – strong – voiced – non-emphatic	'Bā
Twice	Dental-alveolar – strong – voiced – emphatic	Ḍād
Twice	Laryngeal – strong – voiceless – non-emphatic	Hamzah
Once	Dental-alveolar – strong – voiceless – emphatic	'Ṭā
Three times	Dental-alveolar – strong – voiceless – non-emphatic	'Ṭā
11 times	Total	

There is no doubt that the presence of the characteristics of voicing, strength, and emphasis in this Qur'anic text has contributed to conveying meanings of power and intensity to the recipient's soul, and to drawing an image in the listener's mind that he can perceive, an image that corresponds to a great extent with the scene being depicted.

The expressive value of strong and repeated sounds and their correspondence with meaning

Allah, the Almighty, says: The Striking Calamity. What is the Striking Calamity? And what can make you know what the Striking Calamity is? ﴿ (Al-Qāri'ah: 1–3).

The noble verses describe the Day of Resurrection and what kind of event it is. The Resurrection, in its terror, has an effect on souls.

Whoever carefully examines the sounds of these verses will find the repetition of the sound Qāf and its powerful, striking resonance, which is appropriate for expressing the scene of terror; this sound was repeated three times. The sound Rā' was also repeated four times, with its characteristic of succession resulting from the repeated tapping movements of the tongue during its articulation. This allows us to perceive the extent of the melody embodied in these three verses and its harmony with the meanings they express.

It is worth mentioning that Qāf is a qalqalah letter, and qalqalah means “the vibration and movement of the letter through an articulatory motion when it is pronounced.”⁴² As for the sound Rā’, it is a repeated vibrating sound (consonne vibrante) because the tongue vibrates through repeated contact during its articulation.⁴³

Perhaps the articulatory characteristics of the two sounds Qāf and Rā’ are what have cast their influence on the sensitivity of the recipient and affected him, as the phonetic formation contributed to strengthening the evocation of the image in the recipient’s mind. The listener of this text will undoubtedly feel an atmosphere of intensity and continuity, and this is due to the phonetic formation in which two of the most frequently repeated sounds contributed to weaving its structure: Qāf and Rā’.

It may be useful to add in this context that this intensification of strong and repeated consonants had an effect in suggesting the meanings of the words upon which the Qur’anic text was based (Al-Qāri’ah – Al-Qāri’ah – Al-Qāri’ah). This significance was not based solely on the semantic value of the sound, but also on its phonetic characteristics, which contributed to deepening the listener’s perception of it.

As it appears, phonemic formation, as a phonetic system, constitutes a distinctive feature of the Qur’anic text, and through its presence, it contributes to evoking certain feelings within the recipient’s soul.

Conclusion:

After this study of some examples of Qur’anic discourse, we can discern the role of phonemic formation in the Qur’anic text and its impact on the discourse structure along with its content, whereby the phonetic structure harmonizes with the context, producing an effect on the recipient due to its expressive and representational capacity.

Phonemic formation in the body of the Qur’anic text has appeared diverse in its structure, responding to the circumstances of the listeners and achieving specific semantic purposes. Throughout all of this, it has been distinguished by a qualitative selection of its phonetic effects, which are reflected in the sensitivity of the recipient. Every letter in the Qur’anic text is a sound that corresponds to its mental image and its auditory significance, as well as the specific emotional and affective impact it conveys.

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